

Nassau County 2030 Comprehensive Plan

Recreation and Open Space Element (ROS)

Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal

Provide and maintain sufficient public parks, recreation facilities, and open space to meet the recreational needs of County residents and visitors.

OBJECTIVE ROS.01

The County shall acquire, develop and efficiently maintain adequate community and regional recreation facilities to achieve and maintain the adopted Level of Service (LOS) in order to meet projected recreational needs through the year 2030.

Policy ROS.01.01

The County shall prepare and maintain a Parks and Recreation Master Plan in cooperation with appropriate agencies to guide the development and maintenance of County parks and recreation facilities. The Plan should accomplish the following:

- A) Inventory the County parks system;
- B) Recommend guidelines for the size, timing and phasing of parks in the County by using population trends and projections;
- C) Establish criteria for, and priority ranking of, lands for acquisition and development;
- D) Consider existing and potential funding sources as well as programs for implementation and a long-range capital improvements plan for future parks and recreation facilities.

Policy ROS.01.02

The County should select and assemble an advisory committee representing both the public and private sector to guide the development of the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. Extensive public involvement including surveys, public workshops, and extensive discussions with community organizations should be required in order to develop a plan that reflects the needs and values of the County.

Policy ROS.01.03

Parks shall be defined in this Plan as follows:

- (A) "Neighborhood Park" shall mean a local park that serves local residents within ½ mile. The site shall have suitable, well drained soils to accommodate both active and passive recreational uses. Specific uses for the park shall be developed in accordance with the County-wide parks and recreation needs assessment and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, and as further defined in the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time. The optimal size for a neighborhood park is 5-10 acres (National Recreation and Parks Association, 1996) but may vary according to the size of the

neighborhood and the number of residents being served. Neighborhood parks shall be planned, designed, and constructed in accordance with Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time, which includes alternate neighborhood park prototypes based on size. In Nassau County, development that contains 25 units or less and development that is built as a rural residential development is exempt from the neighborhood park requirements. Rural residential development is defined as a development where all lots have a minimum gross acreage of 5 acres (217,800 square feet) or more.

(B) "Community Park" shall mean a park that serves two or more neighborhoods, and typically serves residents within ½ - 3 miles. The site shall have suitable, well drained soils to accommodate both active and passive recreational uses. Specific uses for the park shall be determined through the County-wide parks and recreation needs assessment and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, which may be supplemented with subsequent neighborhood and community involvement or County Parks and Recreation staff assessment of a specific site subject to the guidance defined in the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time. Community parks are not intended to be used extensively for programmed adult athletic use and tournaments. While the optimal size of a community park is between 20-50 acres (National Recreation and Parks Association, 1996), Nassau County's minimum standard is 10 acres of developable land. Community parks shall be planned, designed, and constructed in accordance with the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time, which includes a community park prototype.

(C) "Regional Park" shall mean a park that serves the needs of residents county-wide. Regional parks shall be located within 5 miles of every resident within urban/suburban areas and within 10 miles of every resident within rural areas. The site shall have suitable, well drained soils to accommodate both active and passive recreational uses. Specific uses for the park shall be determined through the County-wide parks and recreation needs assessment and the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, which may be supplemented with subsequent neighborhood and community involvement or County Parks and Recreation staff assessment of a specific site, subject to the guidance defined in the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time.

While the optimal size for a regional park is 50 acres and larger, Nassau County's minimum standard is 30 acres; however, exceptions to the minimum size standard may be made for sites of significant natural or cultural value, as determined by the Planning Director and the Parks Director consistent with the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time, and based upon the following criteria:

- (1) The site will provide specific public access to a waterway (e.g., beach access, boat ramp, etc.); or
- (2) The site contains a significant historic resource, and the County determines that this resource should be preserved; or
- (3) The site serves to expand an existing public park or other protected natural or conservation lands.

Regional parks shall be planned, designed, and constructed in accordance with the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time, which includes a regional park prototype.

Policy ROS.01.04

The County shall acquire, maintain, or manage through agreement, community and regional parks and related recreational facilities to achieve and maintain the adopted levels of service (LOS) shown below.

Type	Service Radius	Minimum Size	Area /1000 Residents	Access Standard	Other Requirements
Community & Regional Parks - General	County-wide	30 Acres ¹	14 Acres	Community Park: within ½-3 miles of every resident Regional Park: Within 5 miles of every resident in urban/suburban land use designations and within 10 miles of every resident within rural land use designations.	Design Standards as provided in Policy ROS.01.05.
Regional Parks - with Beach Access	County-wide	Variable		10 Acres	At .5 mile linear increments with adequate space for parking
Regional Parks with Boat Facility	County-wide	Variable			1 ramp lane per 5,000 population

¹Exceptions to the minimum size standard may be made for sites of significant natural or cultural value, as determined by the Planning Director and the Parks Director consistent with the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time, and based upon the following criteria:

- a. The site will provide specific public access to a waterway (e.g., beach access, boat ramp, etc.); or
- b. The site contains a significant historic resource, and the County determines that this resource should be preserved; or
- c. The site serves to expand an existing public park or other protected natural or conservation lands.

Policy ROS.01 .05

All community or regional parks shall be constructed to conform to the following design standards:

- (A) Access. There shall be no legal or physical impediment to bicycle and pedestrian access to a community or regional park.
- (B) Prototype Park. The Nassau County prototypical community and regional parks are contained within the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time. The applicable prototype park shall be the guide by which all community and regional parks are designed. The minimum size requirement of a regional park may be modified by Nassau County to accommodate unique natural or cultural features including water-based access based upon the criteria established in Policy ROS.01 .04.

- (C) Minimum land area. While a community or regional park may include wetlands, natural areas, stormwater management facilities and other similar components, the minimum required acreage per LOS standard shall be dry, flat and free of encumbrances that would inhibit establishment of active recreation facilities as defined by the applicable prototype park. This includes, but is not limited to, areas subject to conservation easements, wetland or depression areas, easements that prohibit the use of the easement area for active recreation and other similar encumbrances.
- (D) Shared Facilities. A community or regional park is not intended to be completely passive nor fully active but rather a blending of recreational opportunities which may, solely at the discretion of Nassau County, include space for third party providers to provide indoor recreation space or aquatics.

Policy ROS.01.06

In general, the County shall not seek to acquire neighborhood park facilities. All new development and redevelopment containing a residential component greater than 25 dwelling units, unless otherwise exempt, shall plan, design, and build new neighborhood parks in accordance with the standard established herein. Rural residential developments where all lots have a minimum gross acreage of 5 acres (217,800 square feet) or more are exempt from the neighborhood park requirements.

New private neighborhood parks shall be maintained and operated by the developer and/or Homeowners Association, Property Owners Association, Community Development District, or other similar entity. Land and improvements for neighborhood parks shall be provided by new development at the time of initial construction of residential units and shall be reviewed through the Class II development review process outlined in the Land Development Code (LDC). Criteria for the location and design of such facilities shall be as established herein. At the time of application to the County which creates, or will cause to create residential units, the applicant shall demonstrate how the policies defined herein will be satisfied.

Type	Service Radius	Minimum Size	Area/1000 Residents	Access Standard	Other Requirements
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood	5 Acres or as approved by the County Planning Director, in accordance with the standards herein and the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time	4 Acres	Within .5 mile walk of every resident along sidewalks or trails	Design Standards as provided in Policy ROS.01.07

The required size and location of a neighborhood park shall be based upon the total acreage required as determined in accordance with the acres/resident level of service standard established herein, the ability to meet the Access Standards established herein, and the standards defined in

Policy ROS.01.07 of the adopted Nassau County PROSMP. A development may be required to have more than one neighborhood park in order to meet the service standards adopted herein.

Policy ROS.01.07

All neighborhood parks shall be constructed to conform to the following design standards:

- (A) Access. Neighborhood parks must be easily accessible from safe and adequate bicycle and pedestrian facilities, as determined by Nassau County, from their home to the neighborhood park unimpeded by a physical or legal impediment.
- (B) Prototype neighborhood park. The Nassau County prototypical neighborhood park and design principles are contained within the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time. These prototype park and design principles shall be the guide by which all neighborhood parks are designed. Based on the level of service standard required in Policy ROS.01.06, when a development generates less than 5 acres of demand for a neighborhood park, alternate prototypes, principles and standards are provided in the Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual that shall guide park design.
- (C) Street frontage. At least two sides of the park, or thirty-three percent (33%) of the total perimeter of the park, whichever is greater, must abut a street.
- (D) Minimum land area. While a neighborhood park may include wetlands, natural areas, stormwater management facilities and other similar components, the minimum required acreage per LOS standard shall be dry, flat and free of encumbrances that would inhibit establishment of active recreation facilities as defined by the Nassau County prototype Neighborhood Park. This includes, but is not limited to, areas subject to conservation easements, wetland or depression areas, easements that prohibit the use of the easement area for active recreation, and other similar encumbrances. In cases where a utility easement is present, the utilities must be located underground and the easement holder shall provide a written statement to the Planning Department approving the use of the area for recreation as shown on the correlating site plan for the individual park.
- (E) Shared facilities. Stormwater treatment facilities (**SWMF**) such as retention and detention ponds may be designed within a neighborhood park subject to the applicable standards for neighborhood parks but shall not count towards the minimum acreage LOS standard in ROS.01.06.
Where neighborhood parks have an area of five acres or greater, SWMFs may be credited towards meeting the minimum area standards defined in Sec. 29-46(b)(1)b.i. subject to the following:
 - (1) SWMFs shall be limited to the lesser of 12% of the total park area. or the actual required volume capacity for the pond as determined by Nassau County Engineering Services based on a review of the project's submitted drainage calculations.
 - (2) SWMFs shall be activated and incorporated as contributing and functioning elements of the park through the inclusion of ADA compliant multi-use trails. fitness stations, picnic area. and other similar active recreation amenities.
 - (3) SWMFs shall not be encircled, in whole or in part. by chain-link fencing or a similar barrier.

Policy ROS.01.08

Recreation impact fees may be implemented and updated as necessary as a funding source for new parks and recreation facilities.

Policy ROS.01.09

All residential development within the County shall be required to meet the level of service standards in Policy ROS.01.04 through either the dedication of park land to the County or the payment of impact fees for park land to the County. It shall be the County's sole decision to require dedication of land to meet the level of service standards established in Policy ROS.01.04 and further detailed in the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time, or accept payment of impact fees for park land in accordance with the adopted Impact Fee Regulations (Sec. 34-21, Nassau County Code) to mitigate new demand placed on the Regional Park system. After making an individualized determination that dedication of land is related both in nature and extent to the impact of the proposed development based on the factors set out below, the Planning Director, in coordination with the Parks Director, shall have the authority to mandate the dedication of land in accordance with this policy or accept the payment of impact fees for park land.

Any dedication of land for a Regional Park shall be eligible for park land impact fee credits as defined in the adopted Impact Fee Regulations (Sec.34-21, Nassau County Code).

The following factors shall be evaluated and used to guide the County's decision-making process to require the dedication of land or accept payment of impact fees for park land:

- (A) Acreage Size of Demand Generated. The total acreage demand generated by the proposed development to meet the level of service standards established in Policy ROS.01.04 and the relationship of this total acreage demand to the minimum and/or ideal acreages of a Regional Park as defined herein and further detailed in the Nassau County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan and the ability of any potential park within the development to provide the prototypical Regional Park facilities defined in Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time.
- (B) Site Characteristics. The physical characteristics of a potential Regional Park site and its capacity to support the uses associated with a Regional Park as defined herein and further detailed in the Nassau County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan and the Nassau County Parks Administrative Procedures and Design Manual, as amended from time to time. These characteristics may include, but are not limited to:
 - Available multi-modal access;
 - Adequate buffers to minimize negative impacts to adjacent neighborhoods;
 - Site configuration, topography, soils, geometry, and vegetation that are conducive to the construction of both active and passive recreation facilities;
 - Adequate utilities to support the proposed facilities and amenities;
 - Scenic beauty and vegetation;
 - Estimated costs to develop the site; and
 - Anticipated local, state, regional or federal permitting requirements.
- (C) Expansion of Service. The ability of the potential Regional Park to expand or provide additional service in unserved or underserved areas.

- (D) Location (General). Proximity/relationship of the potential Regional Park to other existing, potential, or planned County Parks/Preserves, State Park, State Forest, National Forest, or other similar publicly held recreation or conservation lands. Relationship of the potential Regional Park to unique environmental features, bodies of water and/or cultural resources.
- (E) Location (Water Access). The potential Regional Park's relationship to waterways and the Atlantic Ocean. Any residential development or redevelopment that produces an increased demand on the Regional Park system with frontage or access on a navigable waterway, river shore, or the beaches of the Atlantic Ocean shall, unless otherwise determined by Nassau County to not be in the best interests of the citizens, partner with Nassau County to dedicate land, design, and build new Regional Parks and facilities providing access to waterways, shores and beaches. It is the expressed intent of Nassau County to acquire properties that provide access to navigable waterways and the Atlantic Ocean.
- (F) Connectedness. The ability of the potential Regional Park to create a logical expansion of, or connection between, public holdings and/or facilities. This may include creating linear based ecological corridors or recreation facilities that expand existing, planned, or potential Regional Parks and improve the overall service provided to the citizens of Nassau County.
- (G) Future Potential. The ability to expand the potential Regional Park in the future as adjacent lands develop or are acquired.
- (H) Implementation of Community Planning Efforts. Relationship between the potential Regional Park and any existing Area Plan, Corridor Plan, Master Plan, Master Planned Community, Master Planned Development, Sector Plan, Development of Regional Impact, or other community planning initiative or exercise.
- (I) All land dedications must be proportional to the residential development's anticipated impacts on the County's Regional Park system. No residential development will be required to dedicate park land in excess of their impact as determined by the level of service standards in Policy ROS.01.04.

Policy ROS.01.10

The County shall seek interlocal agreements for the collection and disbursement of recreation impact fees with the municipalities within the County.

Policy ROS.01.11

The County shall cooperate with public agencies and private landowners to continue to provide public access for hunting and fishing.

Policy ROS.01.12

The County shall encourage and create incentives such as cluster development standards, density bonuses, mixed use development etc., for the dedication of recreational land.

Policy ROS.01.13

The County shall pursue available grant sources for the acquisition and development of park and recreation areas, including but not limited to Federal and State funding.

Policy ROS.01.14

The County shall maintain and develop existing parks to their optimal level with consideration given to the needs of the community served and the functional capacity of the parks.

Policy ROS.01.15

To increase efficiency and convenience in the recreation system, the County will coordinate through interlocal agreements with other public agencies which have recreation areas in the County.

Policy ROS.01.16

Whenever possible, recreation sites should be established with multi-use purposes to provide both recreation facilities and to ensure preservation or conservation of environmentally sensitive lands.

OBJECTIVE ROS.02

The County shall assure appropriate multi-modal access to all public recreation areas maintained by the County, including beach and waterfront facilities. Recreational facilities required for new development shall be constructed to maximize appropriate multi-modal access.

Policy ROS.02.01

The County will provide for adequate vehicular parking and bicycle racks at all new County recreation areas and will ensure the installation of such facilities at the time of the reconstruction or additions to existing County recreation areas.

Policy ROS.02.02

Sidewalks, bicycle paths and multipurpose trails shall be provided at the time of construction or reconstruction as defined in the County Land Development Code along public roads which provide access from neighborhoods to County parks.

Policy ROS.02.03

The County will provide accessible parking and barrier-free access to all types of County recreational facilities.

Policy ROS.02.04

The County shall require as a condition of site plan approval, that easements for public beach access be provided by a developer of beachfront property, at an average of one-half mile intervals.

Policy ROS.02.05

As a condition of development approval, all developers constructing recreational facilities shall be required to provide adequate access of all kinds to recreational facilities and public water bodies to meet Objective ROS.02.

Policy ROS.02.06

The County shall provide in the Land Development Code a requirement that any access to public beaches and shorelines or other recreational sites required as a condition of concurrency or development approval, shall be of sufficient size to accommodate adequate vehicular parking and bicycle racks within the access easement.

Policy ROS.02.07

The County shall require developments with significant frontage along navigable waterways to provide, at a minimum, easements for, or the construction of, boat ramps and/or parking facilities for public use. Such easements may be calculated as part of the development's open space requirements. Criteria for developments subject to this requirement are to be specified in the Land Development Code (LDC).

Policy ROS.02.08

The County shall consider greenways to link existing and proposed nature reserves, parks, cultural and historic sites with each other. Greenways may include pedestrian and/or bike trails.

OBJECTIVE ROS.03

The County shall ensure the provision of open space as required in the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Policy ROS.03.01

The County shall adopt ,in the Land Development Code, specific standards for the provision and protection of open space.

Policy ROS.03.02

The County shall regularly review the Land Development Code to maximize the preservation of open space consistent with the goals ,objectives, and policies of this element and the future recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Policy ROS.03.03

PUD and other mixed use developments shall be encouraged to provide large areas of open space and to provide recreation facilities beyond those necessary to be concurrent with the additional community needs they create.

Policy ROS.03.04

Conservation areas, including wetlands shall be reviewed for inclusion in a greenway system if they would provide a link to nature reserves, parks, cultural or historic sites or extensive floodplains, wetlands, lakes or waterways. Any area designated as a greenway shall count towards the development's open space requirement.

OBJECTIVE ROS.04

The County shall support and encourage appropriate and effective participation and partnership with non-governmental organizations in meeting Level of Service for parks and recreational facilities

Policy ROS.04.01

The county shall maintain partnerships with organizations such as Florida Communities Trust, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), The Nature Conservancy, The North Florida Land Trust, and other organizations to assist in providing the necessary funds to implement a long-range, financially feasible plan for the identification and acquisition of environmental resources, including lands for parks and recreation facilities of all types.

Policy ROS.04.02

The County shall encourage the creation of appropriate public-private partnerships as a model for structuring, funding and operating certain parks and recreation facilities, when it is beneficial to the citizens of the County.